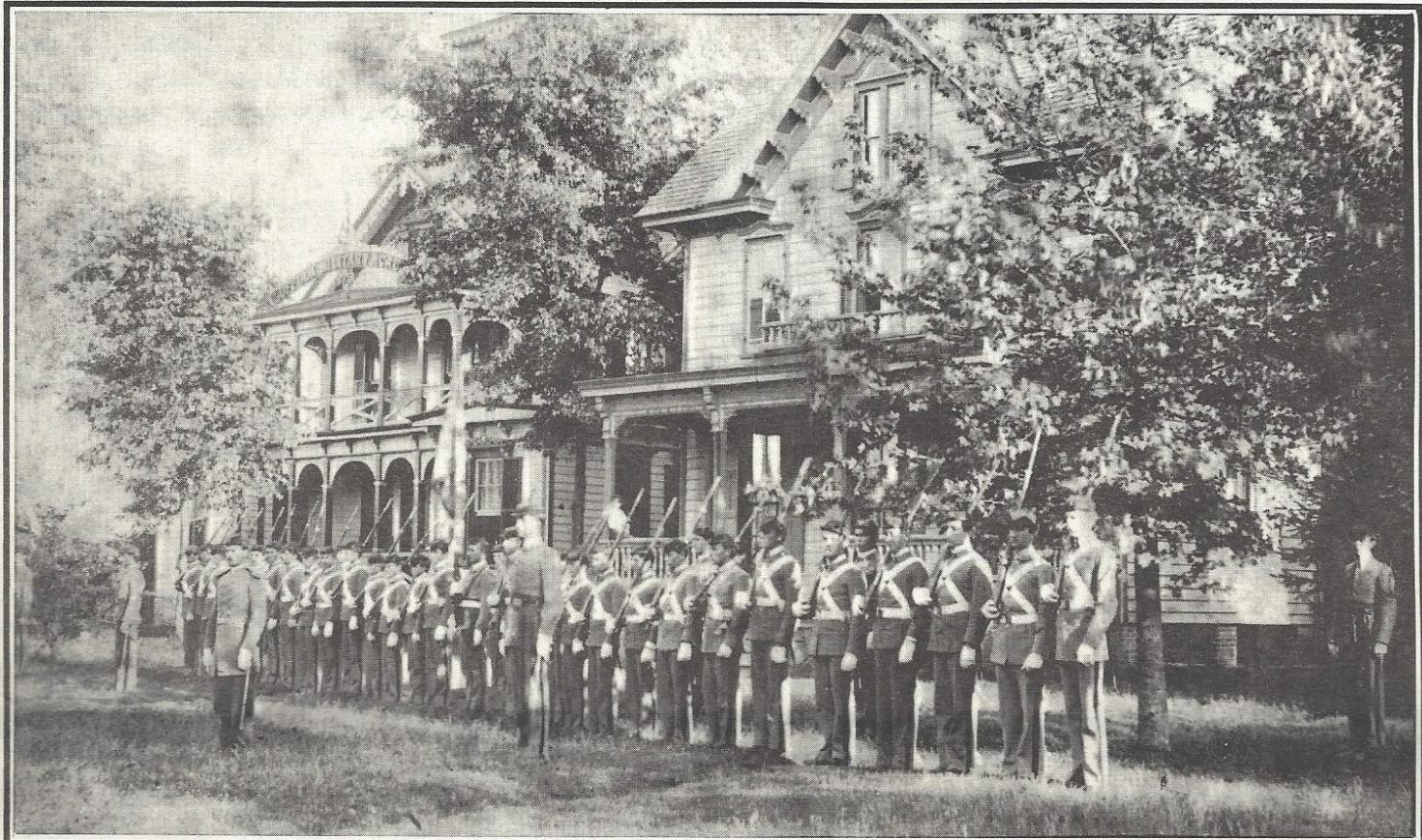


# Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society

*There is history in all lives.*

Volume 6, Issue 2

October 1997



*Suffolk Military Academy c. 1890?*

## BACK TO SCHOOL

*"Among the most inspiring sights in Suffolk of the late 19th century - say old-timers - were the marching and walking through the town of private school students."*

*The marchers were uniformed cadets of the Suffolk Military Academy.*

*The walkers were girls from the Suffolk College, run by the famed Finney sisters. A teacher used to take them out for exercise once a day, leading them along the streets doublefile.*

*Those were the days when Suffolk boasted a remarkable reputation as a private school center. In the three decades before the turn of the century, children from all over Virginia and North Carolina came here for an education."*

Thus begins an undated, unsigned article from an early local newspaper. The writer went on to say that there were at least nine private schools during those years. Most were girls schools but a few were military academies for boys. One was co-educational but some others that specialized in girls taught small boys as well. Some of the girls schools carried their students through the equivalent of a year or two in college (the Finney school was often called "The College"). Classical studies were considered very important and even young students were introduced to Greek and Latin.

Another article which we reprint here in its entirety (with our footnotes on page 4) appeared in the Suffolk News Herald in 1942 during the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the charter of the town of Suffolk. The author, W. E. MacClenny (1875-1950), was a Nansemond County native and a local historian of some note. He was himself a teacher, first at Hobson, then at Cypress Chapel (both in old Nansemond County), before embarking on a business career. He was the author of several volumes of local history.

*Note that in this issue we look at schools in the old city only, as we were fortunate to have a good amount of information on those. Perhaps we can turn to county schools in a later issue.*



*The first public school building at the corner of N. Saratoga and Market Streets.*

## SUFFOLK SCHOOLS REFLECT CITY'S CULTURAL LIFE FIRST CLASSES MET IN HOMES; SAT UNDER PRIVATE TEACHERS

ACADEMY HILL EDUCATION CENTER FOR NEARLY CENTURY; PRIVATE SEMINARIES OF HIGH ORDER OPERATED IN COMMUNITY

BY W. E. MACCLENNY

The first school in Suffolk, according to tradition and the best evidence available, was a "school for good grade" run at Mt. Pleasant,<sup>1</sup> on the west side of Smith's or Meade's creek, just north of the Virginian railway and south of Pitchkettle road, in the days of Col. Andrew Meade, say about 1728. Both before and after that date, when Colonel Meade's palatial residence was visited by Col. William Byrd and the Virginia Commission who were then having the Virginia-North Carolina line surveyed, Col. Meade, it is noted, employed tutors for his family and the neighbors were allowed to send their children to his school. Perhaps General Jethro Sumner's father also ran a school of the same nature at his home, where the General got the rudiments of his education. These two private schools, made available to some of the public, were probably the very first "schools" in the Suffolk section.

About 1752 the Vestry of the Upper Parrish decided they would build a poorhouse in Suffolk Town and they agreed there should be a school for poor children in connection therewith.<sup>2</sup> The steward or teacher was permitted to take in a few pay pupils from families which could afford a small charge. A Mr. Wallis was the teacher.

## ACADEMY HILL CENTER

This school house was located on Academy Hill, at the west end of Mahan street, and this spot appears to have been the educational center of Suffolk, in one way or the other, for something like a century. The school was not a success, nor was the poor-house a success, and soon both were sold to private parties.

Tradition tells us there was a school site on what is now Western avenue, on the hill that was afterwards known as "Hangman's Hill".<sup>3</sup> The land for this school was given by a Mr. Riddick for school purposes, so we are told, but how long a school was operated there is not known.

Another school was started on Academy Hill and was run for a considerable time by different teachers. The most prominent of these teachers, perhaps, was Joel Holleman, a native of Isle of Wight county, and a graduate of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1822. How long he taught in Suffolk is not of record, but he must have been here long enough to become well known and well liked for some of the prominent people of the town who went to school to him have named their children for him. He later became a lawyer, a representative of his county, speaker of the house, and a congressman.

## FIVE SCHOOLS IN 1833

According to Martin's Gazetteer of Virginia, in 1833 there were five common schools in Suffolk. There were kept by private teachers who charged tuition but poor children were permitted to attend upon the payment of tuition by the county, which amounted to some 4 or 5 cents per day per pupil. The names of these teachers, we regret, are not available.

Mr. Bennett DeFord, in the early days, taught a school about where the Christian Church<sup>4</sup> now stands. He was evidently better educated than some, for according to tradition, he named his children for the goddesses of Greece and Rome.

Miss Maggie Allen at one time taught a private school about where Mrs. J. D. Luke<sup>5</sup> now lives on North Main street, and Rev. Robert G. Williams taught in Suffolk for some years near the late residence of Dr. R. H. Webb<sup>6</sup>.

Miss Mollie Brenan taught a school about where the Montgomery Ward<sup>7</sup> store now stands, near the time of the end of the War Between the States.

## SOME HIGHER EDUCATION

While some of the facts concerning the early schools are rather sketchy it is simply because of the lack of information. It would be wrong for the public to assume from this that there were fewer educated people in Suffolk for the Hon. Peter B. Prentis was a graduate of Bowdoin College and was evidently prepared for college in Suffolk. Others from Suffolk were prepared and attended different Universities and Colleges of the day.

Miss Fannie Sumner taught a girl's school at the house of the late Hersey Woodward<sup>8</sup> on North Main street for several years before the war of 1861. Mr. C. H. Causey, Sr., taught a school in the Masonic Hall<sup>9</sup> on North Main street. Professor Edward A. Allen, in his young days, taught a school on Rose

Hill Farm<sup>10</sup> or what is now the Hurff home. Allen later became a professor at the University of Missouri. A girl's school was also taught at the Rose Hill Farm for some time.

### SCHOOL IN CHURCH

At one time a girls school was run in the old Baptist church, though it is not clear whether this was the first Baptist Church on Academy Hill built in 1827, or the frame church first erected about 1835 on the present site. Tradition tells us that after the old church on Academy Hill was abandoned it became a school house and was so used until the war of 1861-65 when it was burned.

Mr. Virginius S. Kilby, a William and Mary man, when young kept a private school on West Washington street, near the T. A. Barbee home, and later taught at the Masonic Hall. A school was also run in the old "Temperance Hall," in the early days, that stood where Freemason street is now, and a Mr. Murdaugh taught a school in Suffolk at one time.

About 1867 Dr. W. B. Wellons was running a girls school at his home on West Washington street, where Col. J. E. West now makes his home.<sup>11</sup>

### SUFFOLK FEMALE INSTITUTE

In 1869, according to an advertisement in a "Sketch Book of Suffolk," the Suffolk Female Institute was established by Miss Sallie Finney and her sisters in the building formerly used by the Central Hotel<sup>12</sup> on North Main street, which building has now been cut in two and the remaining parts stand at the entrance of College court. This was a Methodist school but drew patronage from practically all denominations in eastern Virginia and North Carolina. Miss Sallie Finney was an educator from youth, having taught in Cottage Oak Academy in Isle of Wight county and at Chuckatuck for several years before moving to Suffolk. This school ran successfully for a great many years and did not close until about the year 1908. Many of the students of this school are prominent and influential people of Suffolk today.

### COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

The Suffolk Collegiate Institute was chartered in 1872. This was a school of the Christian Church in Eastern Virginia and for many years had a large patronage. It was co-educational and Prof. P. J. Kernodle was principal for most of the time. After he left, it was run by other people until 1907 when the building was damaged by fire. This school stood where the I. O. Hill Funeral Home is today.<sup>13</sup>

### MILITARY ACADEMY POTENT

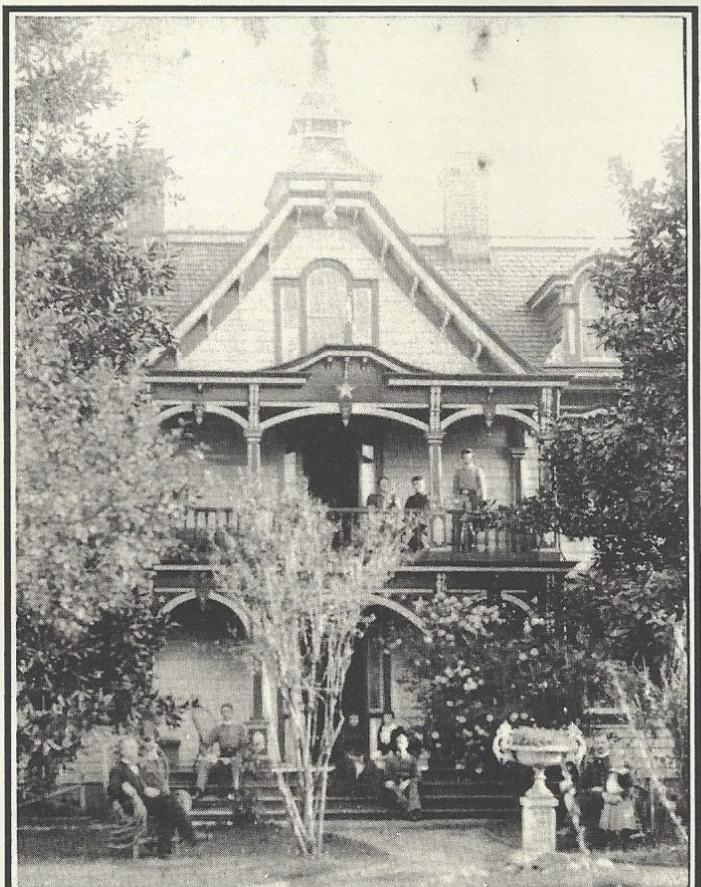
In 1875 the Suffolk Military Academy<sup>14</sup> was established by Professor Joseph King, M.A., of Randolph Macon College, and Rev. Ronald Doggett, M.A., was his assistant. Practically all the time Prof. King employed a V.M.I. man as professor of military tactics and mathematics, perhaps the most noted of whom was Capt. P. St. Julien Wilson. Capt. Wilson taught for a number of years during winter and devoted his spare time and vacations to civil engineering. Finally the City of Suffolk employed him to take charge of the schools of the town and he greatly improved the school system before the close of the year 1898. On the 15th day of May of that year he took his company of National Guards from Suffolk to Richmond to enter the Spanish-American war. On his return after the war he was employed by the State of Virginia Highway Department and later became United States Commissioner of Roads, the highest office in the Federal Highway Department.

The West End Seminary<sup>15</sup> began operation in 1887 and was run by Col. Wm. H. Darden and his daughter, Miss Novella Darden, as principals, and Miss Lizzie King as associate. This school functioned for a number of years.

### MUSIC TAUGHT

Not long after the war of 1861-65 a Mrs. Quimby came south seeking health for her family and being well educated she decided to open a school here. This was the Nansemond Seminary<sup>16</sup> and ran for some years, specializing in music for girls. She was assisted by Miss Fanny Mundy and these two continued teaching practically as long as they lived.

Miss Jenny Brewer, for some years, ran a private school in the house that is now the residence of Dr. F. Whitney Godwin.<sup>17</sup> Miss Lula Butt ran what was known as the Ryland Institute in the west end of Suffolk for a number of years and enjoyed a considerable patronage from the Baptists of this section.<sup>18</sup>



Commandant's Home, Suffolk Military Academy

## FIRST COLORED SCHOOL

About 1865 there was a colored school established in Suffolk by some people from the north who sent down teachers and paid their expenses and that of the school. In the first report of the School Board of the Town of Suffolk this colored school was mentioned and the report stated that it was receiving support from somewhere but they were unable to determine the source. So far as can be ascertained this was the first school for colored people ever established in Suffolk.

## SCHOOLS RATED HIGH

Summing up the early educational advantages of Suffolk, Edward Pollock in his Sketch Book of Suffolk, published in 1886, had this to say: "It is gratifying to know that our own people enjoy exceptional advantages in their efforts to secure this 'pearl without price', and that the system in force here is as perfect and efficacious as any that has been discovered. Besides the public schools, Suffolk numbers among its scholastic institutions several private Seminaries of the highest order, for boys and girls. Virginia has always been famous for the number and high rank of her schools and colleges, and Suffolk has done here full share towards establishing and maintaining this enviable reputation. The Town is eminently adapted to institutions to the excellence of education, the climate is extremely healthy, and society is genial and refined as any in the land." ■

### SNHS FOOTNOTES

1. This is the present location of the Westhaven Lakes area off Pitchkettle Road. One of the streets in that neighborhood is named Mount Pleasant for the plantation that once stood there.

2. The poorhouse stood at the corner of Main and Mahan Streets where a two story brick house stands.

3. Western Avenue runs from Main Street into Riverview. The hill might have been at the first church site behind the current post office or (we suspect this is more likely) the hill on the other side of Constance Road going into Riverview.

4. Suffolk Christian Church is in the 200 block of North Main Street.

5. Perhaps this is the site of the Luke House Restaurant on Main Street.

6. For many years Dr. Webb lived in a beautiful house in the 200 block of North Main that was demolished for the construction of the First Baptist Church parking lot.

7. Montgomery Ward was in the building that now houses the Shoe Gallery on North Main Street.

8. This was in the 200 block of North Main where the First Baptist Church Family Life Center now stands.

9. The Masonic Lodge is at the corner of Freemason and Main Streets, the second building the Masons have had on this site.

10. This was on present day Parkway which overlooks the Nansemond River at the end of Catherine Street and east of Constance Road.

11. It is our understanding that Dr. Wellons lived down the block to the east of Col. West's house. The Wellons house was later moved down Wellons Street and is still standing.

12. Only one portion of the building now stands at the corner of Main Street and Finney Avenue. It is now for sale as part of College Court.

13. I. O. Hill is at the corner of Wellons and West Washington Streets just west of Morgan Memorial Library.

14. This might have been the same building first used by Suffolk Collegiate Institute. (See note #13)

15. We wonder whether this school might actually have been in the same building that was later home to Col. (Actually, Lt. Gov.) J. E. West at the corner of St. James and West Washington Streets. This was where the West End Baptist parking lot is now.

16. Nansemond Seminary was at 240 N. Main, now part of the First Baptist Church parking lot. The Seminary was first on Bank Street, near Holladay Street.

17. We believe that this refers to a house that used to stand on what is now a vacant lot at the corner of Wellons and West Washington Streets.

18. Our best information leads us to believe that this school was first on the lot now occupied by Suffolk Tire Company (309 W. Washington Street) and later on or near the site of the present Morgan Library.

## A POSTSCRIPT

Not mentioned in Mr. MacClenney's article is the Suffolk University School. References to this school appear occasionally, though, as in the fly leaf of a geography book used by twelve year old Thomas Woodward (Sr.) in 1908-1909. He was often heard to refer to the school as "Old Man Stark's".

Prof. Matthew C Stark Principal of Suffolk University  
School Suffolk Virginia  
1972

## JEFFERSON, MASON, RANDOLPH AND WASHINGTON

S. T. Godbey, then Superintendent of City Schools, related in a 1942 news article that the present Thomas Jefferson building was constructed in 1912 to serve both elementary grades and high school and was known as Jefferson High School. It was too small from the start and in 1913 three eight-room schools were built - John Randolph, George Mason and Booker T. Washington, the latter being a Negro school in those segregated days. In 1922-23 a new high school, Suffolk High, was constructed and Jefferson became the grade school. Jefferson is the only one still being used as a school today.

Mason was destroyed by fire in the late 60's. A local lady who was a student at Mason at the time said that they finished the school year using the Sunday school classes at Main Street Methodist Church at first, then sharing Thomas Jefferson with the students normally assigned there. One group used the building in the morning and the other, in the afternoon.



George Mason Elementary (above) was destroyed by fire about 1967. In 1979, John Randolph Elementary and Andrew J. Brown Elementary closed.



Andrew Brown on the corner of Lee and Smith Streets closed in 1979. It was converted to apartments. (Was this called Booker T. Washington when it was built?)



Miss Wilma Powell (1901-1993) pictured around 1921 when she started teaching at John Randolph School. She taught there until 1967.



First day of school John Randolph, c. 1953-54

HELP US MAINTAIN 300 YEARS OF HISTORY...

### ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH BAZAAR

KINGS HIGHWAY IN CHUCKATUCK  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18TH - 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.

LUNCH SERVED

NEW COOKBOOK HOT OFF THE PRESS - AVAILABLE

# PUBLIC SCHOOLS CELEBRATE 101 YEARS

Ann Hargrave Burton (1910-1989) graduated from Suffolk High School and returned there to teach after graduating from Randolph Macon Woman's College. In 1958 she compiled a history of Suffolk and Nansemond County which was published by the Chamber of Commerce. This article is the unedited transcript of a taped interview with her by a Suffolk News Herald reporter. It appeared in that paper on Sunday, October 22, 1972. We present a portion of the original.

"You know public education in Suffolk goes back 101 years, just as it does in Virginia. There'd been some false starts before that. The Legislature would act but then wouldn't appropriate any money, so the action didn't amount to anything."

If we go back to 1870 to Suffolk, we would find a great number of small private schools that sprang up like mushrooms after the (Civil) war. They varied from very small finishing schools to the Suffolk Female Institute that really had quite an academic rating. There was a military school in Suffolk too. At various times there were from seven to a dozen different private schools here. Payment would be something like \$20 or \$30 a semester and you could put that in produce if you didn't have the cash.

So it was in a rather academic climate that public schools started out here. There was no division between the town and Nansemond schools then.

In 1871, when R. L. Brewer was superintendent of schools for Nansemond and the whole operation was under a board of three trustees, the school census showed there were, between the ages of five and 21, 186 white and 141 blacks for a total of 327 of school age in Suffolk.

What they did when the Legislature decreed towns and counties began providing public education was to set up a committee that went out and saw what other communities already had and decide whether any of those (existing private) schools would qualify. There were three here that qualified. Mrs. Christie, Miss Fanny Sumner and Miss Mary Brennan were persuaded to change their private schools into public schools. Their qualifications were examined and they were quite satisfactory and so they were hired - for \$25 a month.

The school term in those days was only three months - three months of the year constituted a school term. I have no idea what the students did the other nine (months). *cont. page 9*

MONDAY, JUNE 8-8 P. M.

## Celebration of Victoria Literary Society.

### OFFICERS:

President.....	Lelia Beraud Savage.....	North Carolina
Vice-President.....	Mary Annie Suiter.....	North Carolina
Secretary.....	Helen Frances Twiford.....	Virginia
Treasurer.....	Marie Ruby Gilliam.....	Virginia
Valedictorian.....	Elizabeth Harwood Bates.....	Virginia

### ORATOR:

Rev. James W. Moore.....	Norfolk, Va.
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### COMMITTEE:

Irma Christian Amiss.....	Virginia	E. Selma Gertrude Rawls.....	Virginia
Louise Burges.....	Virginia	Gertrude Schellinger.....	New Jersey
Mary Elizabeth Majette.....	Virginia	Hattie Steele Taylor.....	North Carolina
Mary Lee Norfleet.....	Virginia	Annie Louise Twitty.....	Virginia

### PROGRAMME.

1. Salutatory.....	By the President
2. Prayer.	
3. Chorus (with Duet Accompaniment), "Approach of Spring".....	Niels W. Gade Vocal Class.
4. Piano Duet, "Hungarian Dance".....	Brahms Mary Elizabeth Majette and Annie Louise Twitty.
5. Soprano Solo, "The Magic Song".....	Erik Meyer Helmund Irma Christian Amiss.
6. Valedictory.....	Elizabeth Harwood Bates, of Richmond, Va.

ADDRESS—REV. JAMES W. MOORE.

TUESDAY, JUNE 9-10:30

## Graduation Exercises.

1. Piano Duet, "Gondolina".....	Virginia Hendrick Bracey and Amorette Louisa
2. ESSAY.....	"There is Many a Crown for Helen Frances Twiford, of Norfolk, Va.
3. Vocal Solo, "Dear Heart".....	Mary Adele Fiers.
4. ESSAY.....	Mary Annie Suiter, of Garysburg, N.C.
5. AWARDING CERTIFICATES OF DISTINCTION AND PRIZE	
6. Piano Solo—Mazurka, D Minor.....	Hattie Steele Taylor.
7. ESSAY.....	Marie Ruby Gilliam, of Crittenden, Va.
8. MEDALS PRESENTED.	
9. Vocal Solo, "Little Doris".....	Laura Virginia Willey.
10. ESSAY.....	"Flowers of True Friendship" Lelia Beraud Savage, of Roper, N.C.
II. Chorus, "Eventide".....	Vocal Class.
12. DIPLOMAS CONFERRED.	

## NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

First of all, I would like to thank our new members. This important work will succeed only with strong community backing. Preservation is slow and tedious but definitely worthwhile. Thank you new and "old" members for caring and supporting this important cause.

This next year should be a turning point on Main Street. With positive attitudes and hard work, we will turn this historic area around and see it take on new life! Please - I urge you to get involved. This old town is too precious to be treated poorly and indifferently.

Our October meeting should be a lot of fun. I hope to see you at Riddick's Folly on October 13th as we celebrate many decades of Suffolk High School.

Just wait until you see our 1998 Calendars. This should be a successful fundraiser. The supply is limited so buy yours early. They will be great Christmas gifts too!

In closing I would like to say how much we miss our dear friend and SNHS member, Joyce Saecker. Joyce loved Suffolk and her loss is strongly felt by so many.

## NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT'S CALENDAR

Feb. 24 - Sue Woodward and I worked on the newsletter about College Court, etc. I made calls to organize trip to New Bern.

Feb. 25 - Sue attended meeting of Suffolk Woman's Club and was presented a donation of \$500 for the SOS project.

Feb. 26 - **Elizabeth Gordon** and I worked on newsletter. Elizabeth did the typesetting.

Mar. 1 - **Riddick's Folly Ball** - I got sick and understood we missed a wonderful event.

Mar. 4 - **Elizabeth Gordon, Linda Consolvo, Barbara McPhail, Irene Pinner, Mary Lawrence Harrell, Sylvia Pond** and I prepared newsletters for bulk mailing.

Mar. 5 - Mailed newsletters. Oh Sue! This one was perhaps the best ever!

Mar. 10 - **SNHS Annual Business Meeting** held at St. Paul's Church. Seventy people attended this covered dish supper and meeting. How wonderful to visit with many new members. The food was wonderful and **Mary Darden**'s program was enjoyed by all. **Jim Bob Lane** from Virginia Beach, who grew up in College Court, was our guest.

Mar. 13 - Officers of the SNHS were invited by the City to meet with the **Suffolk Landmarks Commission**. **Mary Ruffin Viles** from the **Department of Historic Resources** was also in attendance. We talked about Main Street Houses, Suffolk Historic Districts and the National Register of Historic Places and SHS.

Mar. 18 - Sue, Barbara and I met with the **City Manager** to talk about joining forces with city staff to promote **National Preservation Day**. This suggestion came from the City Manager.

Mar. 21 - Several of us met with **Elizabeth Friel** of the Planning Department.

Mar. 24 - I attended **Downtown Suffolk Association (DSA)** meeting.

Mar. 26 - I met a group from **Norfolk's Railroad Historical Society** and showed them our train station.

Apr. 1, a.m. - Sue and I were invited to join the **City Manager** and **Cindy Rohlf**, Assistant to the City Manager, for lunch to discuss Main Street concerns.

Apr. 1, p.m. - First **Preservation Day** meeting was held at City Hall. Barbara, Sue and I met with city staff and others to begin formulating ideas.

Apr. 2 - **Linda Consolvo, Irene Pinner, Janice Thomas, Sylvia Pond** and I fixed food for the **New Bern Trip**.

Apr. 3 - Twenty-seven people (all but two members of SNHS) left bright and early for a two day tour of **New Bern**. Thankfully everything went smoothly - we had a wonderful time! Sincere thanks to **Linda Consolvo** who was my "right hand" and to **Becky Elmore Clements**, our "New Bern Connection" who caused our trip to be so special.

Apr. 7 - I had an interview with **Lou Hansen** from the Virginian-Pilot to talk about preservation, Main Street, etc.

Apr. 8 - **Andy Damiani** asked me to appear on his TV show to discuss Main Street and downtown preservation. Good luck Andy on your West Washington Street project.

Apr. 14 - Second "Preservation Day Celebration" meeting. Barbara, Sue and I attended **SNHS Board of Directors** meeting.

## SNHS OFFICERS 1996-98

President

*Betsy Brothers*  
539-6312

1st Vice-President

*Barbara McPhail*  
539-1131

2nd Vice-President

*Mary Lawrence Harrell*

Corresponding Secretary  
*Connie Happel*

Recording Secretary

*Linda Consolvo*

Treasurer

*Sylvia Pond*

Assistant Treasurer

*Elizabeth Gordon*

Director at Large

*George Consolvo*

## STANDING COMMITTEES

Collections

*Jack Brantley*  
*Lee King*  
*Fan Panton*

Costumes

*Linda Consolvo*

Hospitality

*Pat Snyder*

Main Street R & R

*Barbara McPhail*

Membership

*Elizabeth Gordon*

Newsletter & Programs

*Sue Woodward*

Publicity

*Dana Adams*

Apr. 17, a.m. - Sue and I met with **Lou Hansen** for pictures about Main Street articles.

Apr. 17 - Sue, Barbara, George Consolvo and I met with **Myles Standish** and **Ed Roettger** about Main Street concerns.

April 17, p.m. - Meeting about "Reclaiming Our Streets".

Apr. 18 - Barbara and I observed and photographed several Main Street properties. I stepped in a deep hole and was glad Barbara was strong enough to pull me out!

Apr. 24 - Preservation Day meeting at City Hall.

Apr. 25 - Sue, Barbara and Phil McPhail and I met with **Bill Crosby**, an architectural historian with the **Virginia Department of Historical Resources**. We asked his advice about several Main Street properties.

Apr. 28 - Attended a **Save Our Station** meeting at **George Consolvo's** house.

May 6 - Preservation Day meeting at City Hall.

May 12 - SNHS Board meeting - another long one! So many concerns.

May 13 - Channel 13 TV interviewed me at the **Main Street Station**.

May 14 - Barbara and I worked at our old house, **400 North Main Street**, getting it "ready" to open on Preservation Day.

Met **Jim Caton** at R/R Station to plan for May 17 workday and photograph interior of station.

May 16 - Another day of dust and grime for Barbara and me at **400 North Main Street**.

May 17 - **Save Our Station Work Day**. **George Consolvo**, **Jim Caton**, **George Blair**, **Jim McLemore**, **Randy Hicks** and **Everett Birdsong** and others took out the flooring at the R/R station. City trucks and workers hauled away the debris. Exhausting, dirty work! Thanks fellows!

May 18 - **Suffolk's Preservation Day Celebration** on Main Street from Constants Wharf to Market Street. My thanks to our members who worked hard to support this effort.

June 2 - I met with the **Suffolk Council of Garden Clubs**. The council has representatives from nine local garden clubs and I proposed that they consider asking their clubs to decorate the houses for our annual candlelight tour. Members from each club would decorate a house every other year.

#### **SNHS Board Meeting.**

June 3 - Preservation Day wrap-up and planning for 1998 celebration meeting.

June 5 - **Candlelight Tour 1997** meeting.

June 17 & 18 - Sue Woodward and I had a two day "Nags Head Front Porch" planning retreat. Believe it or not - we worked hard and had fun, too!

#### **VACATION - Nags Head**

#### **July 14 - SNHS Board Meeting.**

July 17 - Steve Herbert, Assistant City Manager for Development, asked me to meet with him, **Myles Standish**, **Paul Fisher** - Director of Planning and **Ray Gindroz**, a consultant who specializes in renovation of historic small downtowns. Mr. Gindroz was Portsmouth's consultant during its downtown renovations and the streets adjoining. They are committed to this renewal process and it is very exciting indeed. Eleven members from the SNHS will serve on the new

#### **Greater Downtown Development Committee.**

July 19 - Mary Darden, Sharon Picot and I visited the **Gwaltney House** in Five Forks as we worked on **Christmas Tour**.

July 21 - I had great fun going through the SNHS photo collection. Deciding which historic photos to have copied was difficult because each one is interesting.

Took photos to camera shop in Norfolk to have negatives and copies made. We often have requests for historic photos - if you're interested call me. Also, watch for our **1998 Historic Suffolk Calendar**. I think everybody will want one!

July 22 - Linda Consolvo and I met with Lee Hart and others from the **Tom Smith Camp, Sons of Confederate Veterans** to plan for the November 1, 1997, **Marion Watson Award dinner**. Look for details and please plan to attend.

July 23 - Sandra LoCascio Hollowell asked me to look at the collection of peanut and Planters items and pictures they have from the **Planters' Peanut Museum** honoring her father, **Ted LoCascio**. Ted's family has offered the collection to our Society.

July 25 - More pictures - back to Norfolk.

July 26 - Barbara McPhail and I met with **Fan Panton** and **Margaret Brown**, who are working on our first **Historic Suffolk Calendar**. Thanks girls! We can't wait to see it.

July 28, a.m. - Back to the camera shop in Norfolk.

p.m. - Dana Adams and I rode over tour route - took pictures and got lost!

July 29 - Sue, Mary Williams and I spent a lovely afternoon in **Orbit** looking for houses to open for our Christmas tour.

July 31 - Picked up pictures and sold twenty-some to **Nansemond Grill** on Main Street. Had a great lunch there and did Society business too.

#### **BACK TO THE BEACH**

Sept 3, a.m. - Barbara, Fan Panton and I proofed the calendar.

p.m. - Linda, Sue and I met with caterer to plan menu for November 1st dinner.

Sept. 4 - Fan and I returned to Gurley Press about calendars.

Sept. 8 - SNHS Board meeting.

Sept. 9 - I went to the **Preservation of North Carolina's** tour of Old Nags Head houses.

Sept. 10 - Mary Darden, Dana Adams and I returned to the country and met with and toured two pre-Civil Warhouses that will be on this year's **Candlelight Tour**.

Sept. 12 - I attended a **Downtown Suffolk Association** meeting.

Sept. 15 - Worked on these Notes from the President!

*Betsy W. Brothers*

#### **THUMBS UP!**

Wendy Hill of Hall Place Civic League,  
Andy Damiani, Irvin Davis and Wallace Garnett  
Washington Street Renovations and to Nansemond Grill

*Cont. from page 6*

In 1872 one more school taught by William McGuire, changed from private to public status. These schools had practically nothing in the way of property and equipment.

In 1874, the school term was increased to four months and in July of that year the first step was taken toward acquiring a building. A resolution was offered by Capt. Britt<sup>1</sup> and approved by the board that a warrant should be drawn on the district school fund. This was deposited in the bank. In July of 1879 there was a fund of over \$800 and the board owned a lot valued at \$150. That was what was left over after they had paid \$500 to teachers for the year.

In 1878, the Friends of Temperance, who owned a lot next to the Masonic Hall, agreed to sell their property and a Mrs. Christie and Mrs. Brown were installed in that building.

By 1880 we had a male principal for the boys and a female principal for the girls and the next year the term was increased to eight months. That's pretty good.

There's a quotation in the school minute book that the rod was abolished in 1885 and only "moral suasion" was permitted in the correction of pupils.

In 1887 the nine-month term was instituted and three years later Suffolk had 697 students in its schools. That year they (the school board) voted to hire another teacher at \$30 a month, so salaries were going up.



STUDENTS OF MISS HARVEY'S SCHOOL, 1893

Front row: Ray Brown, Marie Woodward, Telza Smith, Rosa Bruce, Emmaline Holland, Susie Nurney. Second row: Lillian Jones, Minnie MacCleary, Katie Beamon, Mrs. Harvey, Miss Florence Harvey, Lottie Lotzia, Jennie Holand, Jennie Ballard. Third row: Janice Carr, Diana Riddick, Annie Darden, Emmie Butler, Pearl Nurney, Hattie Parker, Annie Nurney

TUESDAY, JUNE 9-8 P. M.

### Closing Concert.

1. Chorus, "Fairies, Hither Come" (Lily Bell)	Herman S. Saroni
Vocal Class.	
2. Musical Monologue, "Tomorrow at Ten"	Nora Perry
Elizabeth Harwood Bates.	
3. Soprano Solo, "How Can I Forget You?"	L. Denza
Marie Ruby Gilliam.	
4. Piano Quartette, "Polonaise," C major	Edwin Schultz
Hattie Steele Taylor, Sallie Richards Tucker, Louise Urquhart Burges, Harriett K. Parker.	
5. STATUE POSES—1. Priam Pleading for the Body of Hector; 2. Vengeance of the Thracian Maids on Orpheus; 3. Study in Attitude; 4. Study in Attitude; 5. Thanksgiving	Lelia Beraud Savage, Mary A. Suiter, Helen Frances Twiford, M. Ruby Gilliam, Elizabeth H. Bates.
6. Recitation, "Burglar Alarms"	Anonymous
Theodora Annie Little.	
7. TABLEAUX—HOME SCENES—1. Farewell to Home; 2. First Letter from Home; 3. In Sight of Home; 4. "A Charm from the Skies"; 5. Around the Fireside.	
8. Character Recitation	"Delancey Stuyvesant and the Horse-Cars"
John Richardson Kilby.	
9. Soprano Solo, "Love's Sorrow"	Harry Rowe Shelley
Irma Christian Amiss.	
10. Recitation (in costume), "The Sioux Chief's Daughter"	Joaquin Miller
Laura Virginia Willey.	
11. Chorus, "Last Night"	Kjerulf-Rees
Vocal Class.	

The first (owned) public school was very probably where the Masonic temple is now, or right where Freemason Street cuts through into North Main.

For a time, the school system was permitted to use two rooms at the back of the temple. I think it was a frame building probably just where the street is. There was a move at one time to put a brick addition at the rear of that frame building. The Masons were very generous and offered a great many things. They offered to build another building or they would assist in a friendly suit to get their lot sold and go somewhere else and give us theirs and so on.

I'd like to quote this from some records of 1891 because it's really the story of the public schools in Suffolk: "The Council decided it was unable to proceed to build a school because of a lack of funds."

The City Hall<sup>2</sup> and the (produce) market had cost more than they had anticipated and there was no money left for schools. Later on the Masonic Lodge withdrew its offer. We dragged our feet until they got tired of hearing about it.

The market was the old Academy of Music - it was where Woolworth's and those stores along there are today. The lower level was the market with stalls and out in back there was a kind of farmers' market. The first market had been on the corner of Market Street and North Main.

The later building was quite a pile of red brick with cupolas and balconies and steeples and all kinds of things. The town clock was on one of the cupolas. The police department was on the second floor.

In August of 1892 the council voted to ask for bids for \$8,000 in bonds at 5 per cent to construct a new building. In September they sold \$16,000 of bonds. You have to give Suffolk legislators and city fathers high marks for deliberate consideration. They've never done anything in a rush. Always very, very careful. Finally they bought a \$2,000 lot on the corner of Market and Saratoga.

The superintendent's budget for that year allowed for white schools, the salaries of the principal and four teachers came to \$1,900 and \$200 for incidentals - incidentals like rent and heat and books. For the colored schools, the principal and two teachers got \$697.50 total and incidentals like fuel \$55. The total budget was \$2,872.50. The state reimbursed us \$1,300 and we had \$610 on hand so the current local cost for that year was under \$1,000 for Suffolk's schools.

The first building<sup>3</sup> erected for the sole purpose of being a public school came in 1893 used \$7,000 from the bond issue, \$1,600 realized from the sale of old lot on North Main Street and \$100 to be allocated by the board. The cost of the new building was to be \$925 for the lot, \$6,855.25 for construction, \$2.50 for a survey, \$200.40 was the architect's fee and the equipment cost \$215.18. So the total cost was \$8,197.33. It contained four classrooms on each of two floors and was immediately inadequate so additional rooms had to be rented in the Masonic Temple, the Pythian Castle and some more above stores on the Square.

That building became the first municipal building in Suffolk....

The cornerstone of the present Suffolk High was laid in 1922 and the first class graduated two years later...."

#### Footnotes

1. This might have been Lee Britt, the second Superintendent of Schools.
2. The City Hall/Market was on part of the lot on Main Street on which the new courts complex is being constructed. (See picture)
3. This building stood on the southeast corner of Market and North Saratoga Streets where the Bank of Hampton Roads is today. (See photo, page 2)

## SUFFOLK SUPERINTENDENTS

1870-1974

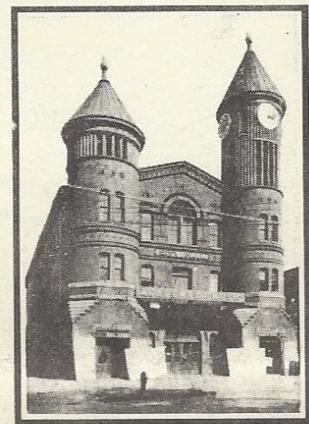
City and County systems were one in the beginning - In 1904 or 1917 (depending on the account one reads) the City system became separate.



- |                         |           |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Mr. R. L. Brewer, Sr.   | 1870-1886 |
| Mr. Lee Britt           | 1886-1913 |
| Mr. J. E. L. DeJarnette | 1913-1917 |
| Mr. John Martin         | 1917-1939 |
| Mr. S. T. Godbey        | 1939-1949 |
| Mr. W. R. Savage, Jr.   | 1949-1974 |

The last Superintendent of the old City schools, Mr. W. R. Savage, Jr., was a native of the Eastern Shore, but he knew Suffolk well. He had taught and coached at Holland High School (1930-34) and served as principal there (1934-43). He married a Chuckatuck girl, Matsie Moore, who taught in Holland. He came to Suffolk as a principal of Suffolk High School (1943-49) and served as Superintendent from 1949 until the merger of the City and County systems in 1974. No doubt it is largely thanks to him that the transition was accomplished so smoothly.

DO YOU HAVE OLD SUFFOLK OR NANSEMOND COUNTY PHOTOGRAPHS?  
IS SO PLEASE LET US COPY THEM. CALL BETSY (757) 539-6312.



City Market

## VIRGINIA ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH

THE ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY MUSEUM  
103 Main Street, Smithfield, VA offers the following:

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 9:00 A.M. - NOON

Workshop and Lecture - Introductory information on how to do Genealogical Research. Visit the Museum file rooms; Library genealogy research room; and possibly the County Clerk's Office.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 12:00 NOON - 4:00 P.M.

Hands-On Archaeology - Bring your artifacts in for identification and interpretation by Archeological Society of Virginia, Nansemond Chapter members Chris Eckard, Ed Bottoms and others.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 7:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

Storytelling Under The Dome: Tales of Local and Tidewater Ghosts - In the main gallery. Stories appropriate to the season and to our history

For information and reservations, call (757) 357-7459

## RIDDICK'S FOLLY GIFT SHOP

Visit the gift shop for unusual gifts and for SNHS's publications, prints and the 1998 Historic Suffolk Calendar.



In 1990, Thomas Jefferson Elementary closed as a regular elementary school, but continues to be used by the Southeastern Cooperative Education Program (SECEP) and houses a regional special education program serving Suffolk, Franklin, Isle of Wight County and Southampton County.



First grade Jefferson High School, 1913. First row, left to right: Charles Elam, George Lyon, Robert Beamon, ? Copeland, Wm. Royster, Gwen Smith, Beverly Holladay, Robert Edwards, Jake Levy, Curry ?, and I. Phil?. Second row, left to right: Thelma Pruden, Mary Withers, Mary Rhodes, Clara Norfleet, Essie Davis, Lucille Privot, Anna ?, Ruth Holland, Edna Nelms, Agnes Smith and Helen Howell.

## JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS AND BOYS BASKETBALL TEAMS, 1921



First row: Frances Birdsong (Darden), Lydia Wyatt.  
Second row: Liza Causey (Flintoff), Virginia Taylor, Lucy Manning (Wells).  
Third row: Mabel Jackson (Turner), Elizabeth West (Birdsong), Margaret Causey (Godwin).



Front row: Marshall Andrews, Sidney Maxey, Theodore Myrick, Hudson Baines, Pep Burton.  
Back row: Tom Birdsong, Mgr., Jack Nurney, Ryland Luke, Wellons Caulk.

## SUFFOLK HIGH SCHOOL

### THE GOOD OLD DAYS

**EXHIBIT AT RIDDICK'S FOLLY OPENS**

**SNHS FALL MEETING MONDAY NIGHT, OCTOBER 13**

In 1990 Suffolk High School closed, ending a happy chapter in the life of our town. It wasn't such an unusual school for its day, perhaps, but it was the institution around which so much of community activity centered.

**Join us on October 13 at 7:30 p.m. at Riddick's Folly for dessert and a stroll down memory lane as we recall nearly 70 years of Suffolk High School memories.**

Can you help with the exhibit? Can you share your yearbook, prom pictures, newspaper articles, scrapbooks, etc.? Call Barbara Norfleet McPhail 539-1131.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER 13

SNHS Fall Meetings at Riddick's Folly, 7:30 p.m.

OCTOBER 13 - NOVEMBER

Suffolk High School exhibit at Riddick's Folly.

NOVEMBER 1

3rd Annual Marion Joyner Watson History Award banquet at Nansemond Suffolk Academy, 7:00 p.m.

DECEMBER 6 & 7

SNHS 21st Annual Candlelight Tour, 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

## DONATIONS

### SAVE OUR STATION

Virginia F. Laine  
Gerard C. Dawson  
Richard E. Harris, Jr.  
Woman's Club of Suffolk  
Rita Mehalko Costello  
Howard E. Kerpelman  
Junto Woman's Club in honor of John Harmon  
Eleanor McClung Powell

### PRESERVATION

New Bern Travel Group in honor of Betsy Brothers  
Anonymous Trust  
Anne Pretlow Henderson  
N. Polk Woolford  
Joan Brothers Vinson

### MEMORIALS

WILLIE SIMONS  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Vinson

CHRIS DOLAN  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Vinson

JOYCE SAECKER  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard L. Pond, Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas S. Brothers  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Vinson

## TRILOGY OF A REBEL LADY

The speaker/performer for this year's Marion Watson award banquet will be Mrs. Peggy Aldhizer of Goodview, Virginia. Mrs. Aldhizer is president of the Mattie Morgan Chapter, Order of Southern Gray. She will appear along with other reenactors to take us back to the Shenandoah Valley in 1861 with the hardships of war. It promises to be a thoroughly interesting program. All SNHS members and their guests are invited. Tickets, which must be purchased in advance, are available at: Bradshaw's Picture Frame, The Dining Room, Riddick's Folly, The Willows, Whit's Tune Up.

*The Tom Smith Camp Sons of Confederate Veterans  
and*

*The Suffolk Nansemond Historical Society  
request the honor of your presence*

*at*

*the third annual*

*Marion Joyner Watson History Award Banquet  
on*

*Saturday, November 1, 1997*

*6:00 p.m. Social and 7:00 p.m. Dinner  
Nansemond Suffolk Academy*

*Tickets \$12.50*

## SAVE OUR STATION STATUS OF GRANT PROCESS

George Consolvo met with Donald Long, a City Public Services Administrator, who is coordinating the grant application. The City's objective with respect to the grant is to have the Federal Highway Administration classify the project as a "Categorical Exclusion" which means that the project is exempt from certain documentation requirements in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act with the exception of certain agency approvals, including the following: Suffolk Public School, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U. S. Fire & Wildlife Service and USDA-National Resources Conservation Service.

Mr. Long has been submitting requests for comments from the above agencies and earlier this month, all such comments were received. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources does require, however, that it be involved in reviewing and approving all plans with respect to the restoration project.

Mr. Long's next step is to provide a written request to VDOT to forward VDOT's request to the Federal Highway Administration for the Categorical Exclusion and for grant funding approval. In order for Mr. Long to forward his request to VDOT, he needs an exterior project plan along the lines of the plan prepared by Jim Caton in the Spring together with a preliminary interior plan. George has also asked Randy Hicks to provide an interior plan and has requested Lynn Rose and Jimmy McLemore to assist in this process.

During discussions with VDOT, the City and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, we have been advised that no additional interior or exterior renovations or demolition should occur until the grant approval process is completed. For this reason, no additional work days at the train station are being scheduled at this time.

## 1997 SNHS Membership Roster (as of September 20)

### BENEFACTORS

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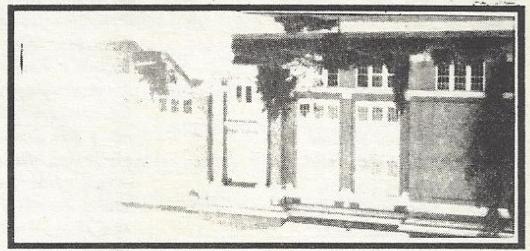
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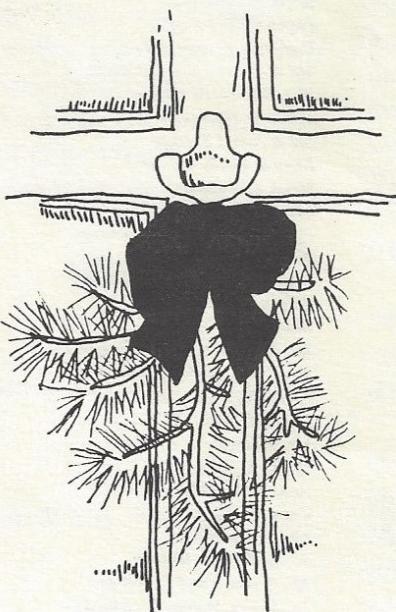
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October 13, 7:30 p.m. Riddick's Folly  
1922-1990  
Suffolk High School



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Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1255  
Suffolk, Virginia 23439-1255



## Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society

21st Annual Candlelight Tour

### Historic Homes along the Western Branch of the Nansemond

Saturday, December 6,  
Sunday, December 7, 1997  
1:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Darden Homestead in Orbit - c. 1850  
Indika at Five Forks - c. 1760 and c. 1850  
Exeter Place on Lake Prince Road - c. 1830  
William Scott Farmstead on Shiloh Drive - c. 1750 and c. 1850  
Providence United Methodist Church - c. 1827  
Woodland United Methodist Charge - c. 1873

Travel the beautiful countryside of old Nansemond and Isle of Wight  
and delight in the discovery of these hidden treasures.